

National Agriculture Week

Congressman Steve King

Each year in the United States one week is designated to recognize the achievements of agriculture through the celebration of National Agriculture Week.

This year, National Ag week falls on the week of March 4-10. This celebration is fitting in a nation where food supplies and food choices have never been jeopardized. Any successful food chain is first and foremost reliant on abundant supplies at affordable prices.

Historically many nations have struggled to build a sustainable food chain and some fail to do so even today. Yet here in the United States, urban America has become so accustomed to the safest, most diverse, and the lowest priced food in the world, that our agricultural system is nearly forgotten and often taken for granted. National Ag week gives us the opportunity to remind the 99% of American's who consume our food, how important the 1% who grow our food are.

In Iowa, however, agriculture surrounds us. Its great benefits to this country and the world are realized not only during National Ag Week but every day. It takes dedicated farmers and efficient processors to grow, transport, package and distribute our food products. It's their work, day in and day out, that ensures our supermarkets are stocked with quality, affordable food, and it's their work that helps to drive our economy. After all, as the Secretary of Agriculture has stated, "if people are able to buy a little more in the grocery store, someone has to stock it, package it, shelve it, process it, ship it."

Iowa is a consistent national leader in the production of several agricultural categories including the production of corn, soybeans, hogs, eggs and ethanol, but Iowa's success in agriculture was

not an accident. This land between the rivers is blessed with productiveness. Our great state has deep fertile soil and a climate suitable for combining the sun's power with plentiful rain to produce an abundance of food. This is why Iowa is often referred to as the "breadbasket of the world". These blessings were bestowed on our land by the Creator, and I believe the Creator is pleased that we have developed His creation into something that generates so much good in the world.

We must also give credit for our success to the Founding Fathers of this nation and their keen understanding that a Constitution with guaranteed property rights was essential to encouraging an agricultural base in the U.S. For the pioneers who settled this prairie it took many years, and sometimes a lifetime, to build a homestead, cultivate the soil, and pay for the land. Without the guarantee that the Government would protect what they toiled long and hard for, how many of our forefathers would have decided to load all their families and belongings in a wagon and head west?

Finally, much of our success is owed to the succeeding generations who have continually built on the foothold the pioneers established. Each generation has battled the elements and learned from their mistakes, but they have steadily developed Iowa into one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. As farmers honed their skills to produce raw products, agri-business evolved to add value to our grains, livestock, eggs and dairy products. This successful partnership has allowed our abundance to fill the stomachs of mankind everywhere on the globe.

Learning from the past is vital, but now is the time to look forward. The task of feeding over 9 billion humans by 2050 is a bigger challenge than any navigated previously. Modern agriculture will need to utilize all relevant skills starting with research from our land grant colleges and agricultural companies, to genetic improvement of our seeds and livestock, to enhancements in use of the soil. We must also export our agricultural knowledge, equipment, and products to needy areas around the world.

When observing National Agriculture Week there is one constant to be assured of, Iowa and Iowans will be at the center of this global agricultural challenge. Agriculture is in our genes, and our nation and world will benefit because of the commitment Iowans have to our soil.